Business Plan
2016–2017

Department of Community Services

NOVA SCOTIA

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

I'm pleased to present our *2016-17 Business Plan* on behalf of the Department of Community Services. This will be an exciting and busy year at Community Services with the momentum created by transformative change.

This unprecedented opportunity to redesign the province's entire social services system will result in a department that is responsive to the challenges and diversity of Nova Scotia in the 21st century. The transformation plan will continue to drive far-reaching activity during 2016-17.

The province's first accessibility legislation is being introduced to make Nova Scotia a place where all citizens have access to opportunities and can achieve their full potential. Legislation will include accessible information, labour market and employment opportunities, client services, public transportation, housing and recreation, as well as attitudes and awareness.

The Disability Support Program (DSP) is becoming more person-directed, accessible and flexible, guided by the *Roadmap*. More DSP clients, who have not previously had the chance to live in the community, are making this significant transition.

Being on a wait list is difficult for people looking for support, or to change their type of support. A streamlined wait list for the province is replacing four regional lists. This will make it easier to update information and to offer program choices to people with disabilities.

Nova Scotia's children, youth and families deserve a continuum of supports so they can contribute to stronger communities.

An updated *Children and Family Services Act* (CFSA) will be proclaimed. New programs and services will ensure that supports are provided in the most appropriate and least intrusive manner. Community-based prevention and early intervention programs are expanding province wide. Stronger Families NS is providing families with more support before serious problems, or a crisis, can develop.

Work is continuing to raise awareness about sexual violence and to respond with appropriate services, supported by a strong network of community partners.

Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) transformation is exploring better ways to address the financial needs of low income Nova Scotians, as well as improving program choices for different groups. Changing the ESIA program overall will take some time, but we're making some improvements right away.

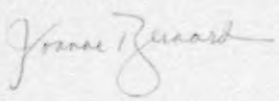
Many processes that complicate the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program are being simplified, including the way clients apply for one-time support.

The largest increase to the personal allowance in the program's history comes into effect in 2016-2017. The personal allowance is increasing by $20, or eight per cent, bringing it to $275 each month.

Overall, the Department of Community Services is strengthening corporate governance to ensure the changes we make now are sustainable into the future.

This ambitious change is made possible by the staff of the department and the network of organizations providing services on our behalf who work tirelessly every day to help our most vulnerable citizens.

Sincerely,



Honourable Joanne Bernard
Minister of Community Services

SECTION 1: MANDATE

The overall mandate of the Department of Community Services is to provide for people in need. In doing so, the Department offers a wide range of social services to Nova Scotians in need and operates under a broad legislative mandate. The services provided by the Department form the social safety net and play a significant role in contributing to better futures for our children and families, persons with disabilities, and to the overall health and well-being of communities throughout Nova Scotia.

Within the department's funding, and that of the three agencies supporting it (Housing Nova Scotia, Status of Women and the Disabled Persons Commission), Community Services aims to promote the independence, self-reliance, and security of the people we serve. This is achieved through excellence in service delivery, leadership, and collaboration with our partners.

The Department works with individuals, families, youth and children to enable them to meet their basic needs, to have control over their own lives, to be safe from abuse and violence, to find and maintain employment, and to participate as citizens in their communities. Programs and services are delivered by staff of the department and a network of funded organizations throughout the province, empowered to make decisions having a positive outcome in people's lives, ensuring that services and supports are accessible, delivered efficiently, include a balanced mix of prevention and intervention programs, and are affordable and sustainable.

The programs and services provided by the Department are key to the social fabric of Nova Scotia, contributing to the success of the work of the core social departments of government like Health & Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development and Justice.

SECTION 1.1: PLANNING CONTEXT

The Department operates in a very complex environment, where economic, education, health and social progress intersect. When one part of the intersection underperforms, the results are evidenced by increased demand for a wide variety of social services: for financial assistance; for training and employment support; for in and out of home support for persons with disabilities; for prescription drug coverage; for more prevention, early intervention and in care supports for children, youth at risk, and families.

Nova Scotia's core social programs have not been able to keep pace with societal and demographic change, nor do they always reflect innovative models of delivery or best practice developments as seen in other jurisdictions across the country. Core programs like Employment Support & Income Assistance (ESIA), Disability Support Program (DSP), and Children, Youth & Family Supports (CYFS) have reached the limits of their financial, policy and human resource capacity to respond to:

- the changing nature of familial relationships;
- the growing gap between urban and rural opportunities;

- the growing depth of income and social poverty for marginalized populations;
- poor health outcomes of marginalized populations;
- the ever-increasing complexity of needs presented by clients – children, those with disabilities, and those living in poverty;
- the incidence of disability and the aging population; and
- the growing expectations of stakeholders, clients and the public.

Nova Scotians expect their safety net to be strong, and to be there when they need it. The specific mandate of the Department over the course of the next several years is to develop an innovative, incremental, and measurable plan for improving the province's social support systems, with a focus on the quality of service delivery to clients and on programs that have the greatest impact. To deliver on this mandate, within the resources available, and to ensure that its core programs are sustainable in the long run, the Department has begun a multi-year plan to transform its programs and service delivery model.

For the ESIA program the aim will be to simplify access, to offer programs that help people move on with their lives, and to reduce the level of paternalism and dependency in the social services system. Three inter-related areas of focus include:

- Modernizing and innovating service delivery;
- Innovating, and targeting program policy and interventions to enable better client outcomes;
- Reforming financial benefits and simplifying income security.

The department is moving in a new direction for child welfare in Nova Scotia. The focus is about working with families earlier, and drawing on their strengths to find solutions before more serious situations, or a crisis, can develop. The *Children and Family Services Act* has been updated and strengthened, recognizing all children want to be safe and supported, and parents want the tools they need to raise healthy families.

Children, young people and families are often best served by connections in their own neighbourhoods and communities. Stronger Families NS will do this by enhancing prevention and early intervention programs in child welfare. The goal is to work more closely with community partners to meet the diverse needs of families in need of support.

Work of the transformation includes:

- Modernizing legislative, regulatory, policy frameworks and organizational structures to address gaps in child protection services and create a seamless continuum of supports;
- Strengthening prevention and early intervention programs and services, partnering and leveraging the resources of funded partners and communities;
- Addressing the downward trend in the foster parent program;
- Ensuring services are accessible to diverse populations, and are appropriate and effective in cross-cultural situations;

- Better helping victims/survivors of sexual violence and their families by working directly with communities

For the Disability Support Program, the focus will be on moving away from the Province's over-reliance on institutionalized care. Areas of focus include:

- Begin transitioning clients to community living settings;
- Strengthening policies and programs, including but not limited to, detailed program design for residential options;
- Ensuring high quality service delivery, including simplifying administrative processes for clients and care coordinators, and improving online case management and reporting capabilities; and
- Introducing accessibility legislation for the province, ensuring Nova Scotia is a place where all citizens have access to opportunities and live free of barriers.

The transformation plan is far reaching in both its reach and depth. Change of this magnitude is needed if the Province is to achieve measurable gains in the social, economic and health outcomes for its most disadvantaged, and vulnerable citizens.

SECTION 2: LINK TO GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

The Government of Nova Scotia has articulated the outcome that it wants to achieve for its people: *Nova Scotia's population is growing, productive and thriving.*

In order to achieve this result, it has defined four broad goals:

1. *Increase net inter-provincial and international immigration levels.*
2. *Enhance workforce participation of youth, older workers and marginalized communities.*
3. *Enhance health & wellness outcomes.*
4. *Improve communities and social well-being.*

The Department of Community Services, in developing its 2016 – 2017 Business Plan, has identified a number of actions which will help to advance government priorities. The table below shows the alignment of departmental outcomes with those of the Government of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia's population is growing, productive and thriving.		
GNS Goal: Enhance workforce participation of youth, older workers and marginalized communities	GNS Goal: Enhance health and wellness outcomes	GNS Goal: Improve communities and social well-being
DCS Outcome: • Clients are attached to the labour market	DCS Outcome: • Clients are safe from abuse and violence. • Clients are included in the community • Clients have control over their own lives • Clients are able to meet their basic needs • Supports and services include a balanced mix of prevention and intervention	DCS Outcomes: • Supports and services are accessible. • Supports and services are affordable and sustainable • Supports and services are delivered efficiently • DCS staff and delivery partners are empowered to make a positive difference in people's lives

Outcome: Clients have control over their own lives

People need to have control over their own lives if they are to be independent. Being independent means having the freedom to make decisions. Our clients with disabilities want to participate in decisions regarding their lives; families, youth and children at risk need to know they can access support, with the least intrusion in their lives; households in financial need to know they have access to a predictable income.

Actions:

- Implement more realistic, achievable access plans for children in care, responsive to improved circumstances for parents, underpinned by improved operational flexibility to ensure access scheduling is based on the child's needs.

- Complete a business case to determine the costs and benefits of introducing a standard, more predictable household rate for income assistance recipients.

- Implement a new Individualized Funding Program within the Disability Support Program, which will provide individualized funding for clients to live independently. Clients will have greater flexibility of funding utilization and improved personal choice.

Outcome: Clients are able to meet their basic needs

People need to be able to meet their basic needs if they are to take care of themselves and their families if they are to have hope for a brighter future. Basic needs may mean financial help, support because of an emergency situation, or support finding the right place to live.

Actions:

- Increase the basic personal allowance for income assistance clients, by $20, from $255/month to $275/month. This represents an 8% increase in income assistance rates, the first increase in three years.

- Design simplified processes for households with one time/short term needs.

- In conjunction with Finance & Treasury Board, complete a study to determine the feasibility of integrating income security programs across government.

- Complete an analysis of the current Employment Support and Income Assistance caseload to better understand the interventions and financial supports required for the different groups within the caseload to achieve better outcomes.

Outcome: Clients are attached to the labour market

One of the fundamental goals of the *Employment Support & Income Assistance Act* is employment: *independence and self-sufficiency, including economic security through opportunities for employment, are fundamental to an acceptable quality of life in Nova Scotia.*

Actions:

- Drawing on best practice research, design a program model which includes a variety of targeted interventions to help prepare clients for employment, support them while they transition to the labour market, and provide post-employment follow-up and support.

- Work with the Adult Service Centres sector to enhance employment and day program supports, generating capacity for Adult Service centres. This will include developing a program approach focusing on improving employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, and building social enterprise capacity for day programming and employment service providers.

Outcome: Clients are included in the community

Being part of one's community is fundamental to quality of life. For children, this means being in school, in the same grade, doing the same things as their peers. It also means, if there is a break from their parents, that they are reunited with families as soon as appropriate; and when living with parents is no longer in their best interests, that they are placed with siblings, or members of their birth community. For persons with disabilities, it means having opportunities to live in the community, to participate in either paid or supported employment, to volunteer, to have opportunities to engage in local cultural, recreational and social events. Disadvantage because of income doesn't need to mean social isolation or exclusion. People need to have access to the programs and supports in their communities without having to know the system and how to ask.

Actions:

- As part of DCS Roadmap commitments, begin transitioning individuals with disabilities from larger residential settings to smaller community-based options.

- Continue with the system re-design of the Disability Support Program; leading to greater access to community living options which result in more flexibility with respect to residential supports for participants.

- Enhance prevention and early intervention programming to prevent families from requiring more intrusive and costly interventions. Introduce a number of projects including 15 new Parenting Journey sites, three of which will be located in African Nova Scotian, Aboriginal and Acadian settings. Additionally, implement two Intensive Family Preservation Pilots, with the purpose of working with families to prevent out-of-home placement or reunite children with their families.

Outcome: Clients are safe from abuse and violence

Living in fear of abuse and violence, or having experienced abuse or violence impacts a person's ability to grow, develop and achieve their full potential. The consequences of child abuse and neglect are far reaching, and can result in physical health, psychological, behavioral and societal consequences. Sexual violence is one of the most traumatic and pervasive of all human rights violations, and its consequences lead to complex social problems. For persons with disabilities, requiring care and protection, they and their families need to know and trust that they are in a safe environment, free from abuse and violence.

Actions:

- Begin implementation of the amendments to the *Children and Family Services Act*, improving investigation, protection, intervention and adoption services, and introducing voluntary services and/or placement for youth ages 16 up to age 19.

- Continue with the development of a structured continuum of services from prevention through to early intervention, child protection, and out of home care, providing children, young people and families with seamless access to a broad spectrum of supports and services that responds best to their needs.

- Continue to invest in *Breaking the Silence, A Coordinated Response to Sexual Violence in Nova Scotia,* ensuring that there is a strong network of community partners with the capacity to raise awareness about sexual violence, and to respond with appropriate services.

Outcome: Supports and services are accessible

There are a myriad of programs and services available through the department, other government departments, through funded service partners, and in the community at large. Yet often times we hear that people do not know what is available, to whom, nor how to access.

Actions:

- Introduce Accessibility Legislation, with a view to removing and preventing barriers that stop individuals from full participation/inclusion in all aspects of Nova Scotia life.

- Work collaboratively with Children, Youth and Family Services to ensure families have access to community based supports and resources like Family Resource Centres, Youth Outreach programs and other parts of the broader social support network.

- Introduce a multichannel strategy to enable clients and service providers to access services by phone, in person, or via the internet.

- Introduce an after-hours support service for foster parents, including weekend services, with consistent programming across the province, so that foster parents can access the support they require to address the needs of children in care.

SECTION 3: CORE RESPONSBILITIES/SERVICES

Government has determined that it will deliver its core services efficiently and effectively. The Department of Community Services plans a number of actions consistent with this direction.

Outcome: Supports and services are affordable and sustainable

Actions:

- Implement a series of initiatives to simplify the administrative burden experienced by clients and staff alike, including streamlining client access, client reporting, payment processing, and client correspondence.

- Begin implementation of the Departmental Outcomes Framework, to ensure sustainability and accountability. This will start with core program key performance indicators and related metrics, and implementation of reporting tools to enable informed decision making and early corrective action. Some of the metrics included in this plan are new, and work continues to develop baselines; while others are still in development and will be brought online during 2016-2017.

- Establish a centralized business intelligence and data analytics service to ensure information is available to support informed decision making for strategic, business, operational planning, budget development, forecasting, business case development, and policy, program, and service delivery improvements.

- Create a Policy Centre of Excellence. Quality policy advice is the hallmark of good government. The Policy Centre of Excellence will provide process management, quality assurance, tools, tips, guidance and training to staff to ensure that the policy advice provided to government is impartial, evidence based reflecting alternatives in the interests of the public good.

- Through the Status of Women, continue to work interdepartmentally and through Federal-Provincial-Territorial Collaborations to strengthen capacity in gender-based analysis.

In addition, while the transformation work continues, the Department has to deliver its core services, and ensure that these are maintained in a way to be responsive to the changing needs of Nova Scotians.

SECTION 4: CORE PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

The Department has three core business areas: Employment Support & Income Assistance; Children Youth & Family Supports; and the Disability Support Program. The provision of these services is embedded in the *Employment Support & Income Assistance Act*, the *Children and Family Services Act*, and the *Homes for Special Care and Social Assistance Acts*. While transformation is underway, the variety of interventions, supports, and services available have to be maintained.

Complimenting these core programs are those provided by Housing Nova Scotia, the Status of Women, and the Disabled Persons Commission.

The core programs of the Department of Community Services represent the Province's safety net. Departmental expenditures consist primarily of grants and contributions – 83.5% - to individuals in need, and organizations providing services on behalf of the department to persons in need. The other 16.5% covers the cost of operating the department, its forty-five offices across the Province, and to pay for the 1,600 staff who are there every day to help people in need each year.

Employment Support & Income Assistance Program (ESIA)

The focus of the ESIA program is to provide financial assistance and supports to persons in need and to facilitate their movement towards employment, independence and self-sufficiency. There are currently approximately 27,000 households receiving income assistance, or some 40,000 beneficiaries. These households and their families rely in whole, or in part, on income assistance to cover the cost of food, clothing and shelter. A variety of special needs are also available to help cover medical costs, transportation, and to help those participating in training or going to work with child care.

The Department's employment programs currently support eligible income assistance recipients to increase their employability and attach to meaningful work. This is accomplished by facilitating access to literacy and skills upgrading, training, and job opportunities.

Through the Pharmacare Program, the Department provides prescription drug coverage for approximately 40,000 people who receive assistance from the Department, including ESIA, DSP and Family and Community Supports. Additionally, the Department provides the Nova Scotia Child Benefit (NSCB), a non-taxable monthly payment provided to low-income families to assist with the cost of raising children under age 18. In 2015/2016 the average number of children in receipt of the NSCB was 36,700/monthly.

While work proceeds with transformation, the department will:

- Ensure that low-income Nova Scotia families will realize the full benefit of the estimated $2,300 increase in federal child benefits per year as a result of the introduction of the Canada Child Benefit on July 1, 2016.

- Establish a protocol with Labour and Advanced Education to ensure job search ready clients of the Employment Support & Income Assistance Program have access to job opportunities.

Disability Support Program (DSP)

The Disability Support Program serves children, youth and adults with intellectual disabilities, long-term mental illness and physical disabilities in a range of community-based, residential and vocational/day programs. There are approximately 5,200 clients in community-based options and residential placements and another 1,600 that participate in adult day programs. There are approximately 1,100 individuals on the DSP waitlist, of which 380 are persons receiving no supports.

While work proceeds with transformation, the department will work to reduce the waitlist through:

- Introducing a waitlist management tool in the Disability Support Program to help monitor progress, and provide for, wherever possible, participants having program choice options.

- Working in collaboration with the Department of Health & Wellness, develop and implement an integrated partnership model to provide responsive, appropriate services for persons with disabilities presenting with multiple, complex needs, to ensure they receive the best available service.

Children Youth & Family Services (CYFS)

The CYFS program provides a variety of programs and services in support of Nova Scotia's children, youth and families. The department's first priority is always the well-being of children, including protection from harm and supporting families when they need it.

Child Welfare investigates all reports of alleged child abuse and neglect, and provides out of home support through the Child in Care, Foster Care, Adoption, and Residential Services programs. There were approximately 9,500 investigations conducted by child welfare staff in 2014-15 and approximately 28,000 child abuse registry searches requested annually. As of October 2015, there are approximately 1,142 children in care, of whom 712 are in permanent care of the Minister or of Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services. Approximately 616 foster homes provide day to day care for about 760 children in the Minister's care. Other residential options are available for children depending on their needs, including 17 community based homes, 1 residential treatment facility, and 1 secure treatment facility.

The Prevention and Early Intervention program offers a wide range of services and supports for children, youth and families facing multiple barriers and at risk for poor outcomes. These programs are designed to prevent a breakdown in family functioning and to support healthy development and well-being. These programs and services are available for vulnerable and at risk children, youth

and families in communities and are intended to address issues early as a way to mitigate the need for child protection involvement. Increasing community-based prevention and early intervention programs will provide families with access to less stigmatizing and more holistic supports to address their needs, when risks are identified. The majority of these prevention and early intervention services are provided by community-based service providers like Family Resource Centres, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Boys & Girls Clubs who receive funding through the Department of Community Services.

While work proceeds with transformation, the department will:

- Continue to invest in *Breaking the Silence, A Coordinated Response to Sexual Violence in Nova Scotia,* ensuring that there is a strong network of community partners with the capacity to raise awareness about sexual violence, and to respond with appropriate services.

- Continue to support the province's network of Transition Houses and Women's Centre, through the Status of Women.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Outcome: Clients have control over their own lives

Indicator	2014/2015 Actual	2015/2016 Forecast	2016/2017 Target[1]
Percentage of ESIA clients exiting for employment	6.0%	7.0%	→
Percentage of DSP clients in independent living programs	14.0%	14.0%	→
Percentage of children and youth placed for adoption	14.0%	14.0%	→

Outcome: Clients are able to meet their basic needs

Indicator	2014/2015 Actual	2015/2016 Forecast	2016/2017 Target
Percentage of Nova Scotians independent of income assistance	95.5%	96.0%	→
Percentage of ESIA clients reapplying within a year	65.0%	65.0%	→

Indicator	2014/2015 Actual[2]	2015/2016 Forecast	2016/2017 Target
Single, Disabled[3]	88% LICO, 72% LIM, 79% of MBM	88% LICO, 72% LIM, 79% of MBM	→
Single	70% LICO, 58% LIM, 63% MBM	70% LICO, 58% LIM, 63% MBM	→
Single, 2 Children	131% LICO, 94% LIM, 103% MBM	131% LICO, 94% LIM, 103% MBM	→
Couple	102% LICO, 72% LIM, 79% MBM	102% LICO, 72% LIM, 79% MBM	→
Couple, 2 Children	116% LICO, 91% LIM, 99% MBM	116% LICO, 91% LIM, 99% MBM	→

Outcome: Clients are attached to the labour market

Indicator	2014/2015 Actual	2015/2016 Forecast	2016/2017 Target
Percentage of ESIA clients in the workforce	10.1%	10.4%	→
Number and Percentage of DSP clients with employment (paid employment or Project 50)	917 clients (64 employment, 853 Project 50); 17%	17%	→

[1] DCS will maintain all 2016/2017 targets at 2015/2016 forecasts. As the Department works through transformation, targets will be revised for 2017/2018.

[2] LICO, LIM, and MBM are measures used to track poverty. Data on these measures comes from *Statistics Canada*.

[3] Results for all households will be monitored; the table above has been condensed for presentation purposes.

Outcome: Clients are included in the community

Indicator	2014/2015 Actual	2015/2016 Forecast	2016/2017 Target
Percentage of DSP clients in community based living	68%	70%	→
Percentage of aboriginal children and youth placed with aboriginal families	76.6% (Foster Care or Kinship Care in a home with at least one Aboriginal caregiver)	76.6%	→

Outcome: Clients are safe from abuse and violence

Indicator	2014/2015 Actual	2015/2016 Forecast	2016/2017 Target
Number and percentage of PPC founded referrals	16 of 42 referrals (38%)	8 of 30 referrals (27%)	→

Departmental Expenses Summary ($ thousands)			
Programs and Services	2015-2016 Estimate	2015-2016 Forecast	2016-2017 Estimate
Senior Management	1,707	1,675	1,280
Policy and Innovation	5,850	5,106	6,469
Corporate Services Unit	2,962	4,753	5,028
Service Delivery	101,733	108,111	101,644
Disability Support Program	304,654	316,523	319,366
Child, Youth and Family Support Program	85,185	94,269	93,863
Housing Services	51,238	42,750	44,992
Employment Services and Income Assistance Program	353,004	340,216	348,221
NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women	9,077	9,122	9,094
Total - Departmental Expenses	**915,410**	**922,525**	**929,957**
Ordinary Recoveries	**16,963**	**18,853**	**18,042**
Funded Staff (# of FTEs)			
Department Funded Staff	**1,646.5**	**1,614.9**	**1,630.5**

Note:

For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2. For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1